

SNAKES IN FLORIDA.

A MAN WHO HAS CAUGHT THEM FOR TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS.

He Charms Them With a Banjo and Cures Bites With a Weed—Rattlesnakes Are Easy to Tame—The King Snake Is a King Indeed—The Biggest Rattler.

After a man has spent 28 years of his life catching snakes he knows what he is talking about. Si Foman is 43 years old. He went into the business of catching snakes when he was 15. He shows evidence of what the insurance men would call "an extra hazardous vocation" in the shape of 75 or more scars, the result of wounds inflicted by the fangs of reptiles. These scars are all over his body—on his legs, one on his jaw, under the eye, where a rattler clipped him and hung one day, while the back of his hands look like crows' nests of scars. He is a colored man and has the appearance of having Indian blood in his veins.

"All snakes," said Si, "like music, and this banjo is the thing I use to catch them with. Suppose I'm in the woods and see a rattlesnake crawl down a gopher hole. I go to the mouth of the hole and play, and pretty soon here comes the old fellow crawling forth. As soon as he gets outside I pick him up and put him in the bag. If he's in the open, coiled under a palmetto leaf, I'm more cautious. About 30 feet off I sit down and play, and the snake quickly uncoils himself and rolls around over the ground as if he enjoyed it. He rattles all the time, but not as loud as he does when he means business and is giving you warning to give him more room. I gradually approach, playing softer and softer, and finally I pick him up about the middle and slip him in the bag and go looking for another.

"A rattlesnake is the most poisonous of all the snakes in Florida. His bite is sure death unless you have an antidote very handy. I've got an antidote, though, and a bite never troubles me now in the least. It is so efficacious that the wound hardly swells. I went down and spent nearly two years among the Seminoles in the Everglades to get it, and then it was good luck. I was out in the woods one day with Knothole. The old fellow got bitten by a rattlesnake, and he started at once for his antidote. I followed him, for I knew what he was looking for. He tried to uncoil the plant by crushing it down with his foot, but I picked it up and told him that was the thing to cure snake bites. He remarked that I was too much of an Indian and must stay always in the Indian camp. The plant not only cures snake bite, but the stings of all kinds of insects, and it is also said to cure rabies.

"Well, to get back to snakes. There are two kinds of rattlers in Florida. One is the swamp rattler and the other the highlander. The swamp snake has a larger head and a thicker body and is altogether a heavier snake than his highland brother. His coat, too, is darker and his diamonds brighter. He is more vicious and gives mighty little time for you to move when he sounds the alarm.

"Rattlesnakes are very easy to tame. Let me handle them for about four days, and they know me and make no effort whatever to bite. I don't take the fangs out, for what's the use? In two weeks they grow out again big enough to kill you, and in six weeks are as big as they ever were. I have heard people say that a rattlesnake gets his poison from a plant, but it's all nonsense. It's in them, for I find those a year in captivity are just as deadly as when fresh from the woods.

"The biggest rattlesnake I ever saw I caught up here by Palatka. He was 10 feet 11 inches long, weighed 38 pounds and had 56 rattles. I had him in a pit there in the yard for a long time. A heavy rain came once and filled the pit up with water, and he drowned. I made a vest out of his skin. I'm afraid I'll never get another snake like that," and Si sighed to think what he had lost.

"Si, how far does a rattlesnake strike?" "Some people say he strikes his length, and others declare that he can jump more than his length, but I've watched them closely, and I know they are wrong. A rattlesnake can't get farther than the length of two coils. That's about half his length."

"Where do you find most of the rattlers?"

"Fort George is a great place for them. Pablo is another good field, while all down the coast in the scrub there are thousands. Then in the hummocks and swamps you will find plenty, and in the pine woods, where there are gopher holes. A rattlesnake likes a gopher hole. It's a nice snug place, and he lives there with the coachwhip, the gopher and the gopher snake in perfect harmony.

"But the great snake, the smart snake, the snake you can educate to perform tricks, is the king snake, and he's the king and enemy of them all, and he kills all he can and eats them, too, if they are not too large. The king snake isn't afraid to tackle anything that crawls. I've seen one kill a rattlesnake almost twice as big as he was. The king snake crawls silently up to where the rattler is dozing and grabs him with his mouth by the jaws, so that the rattler can't possibly use his fangs. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, he coils himself around his enemy and tightens his coils and stretches them until you can hear the bones crack. When he leaves, the rattler is like a jelly."—Florida Times-Union.

Enfant Terrible.
Tommy—Do you ever ride on the horse car without paying?
Mr. Sappery—No. Why?
"Well, I heard mamma say she wished you had cents enough to go home."
—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Spirited Away.
He—I hear that Talkins moved out of his house because it was haunted.
She—Oh, I see. He left because the spirit moved him.—Indianapolis Journal.

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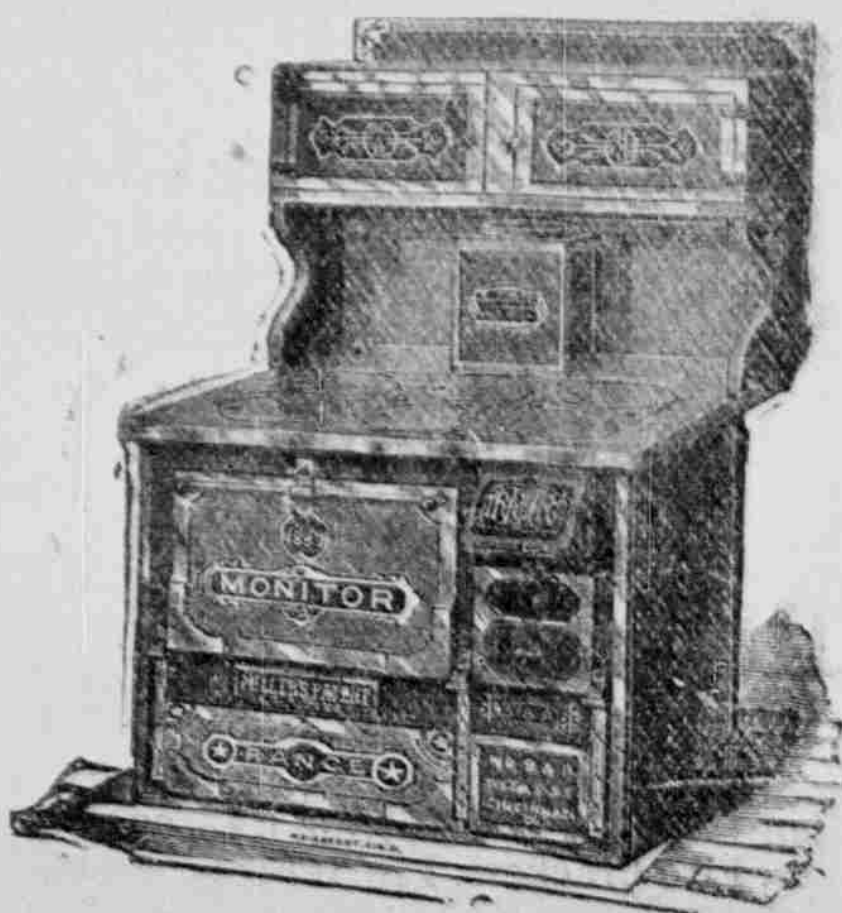
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General Advertisements.

National Cane Shredder

PATENTED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.

The attention of Planters and Agents is called to the following letter from Mr. JOHN A. SCOTT, Manager of the Hilo Sugar Co., regarding the working of the National Cane Shredder, which he has just introduced into the Mill of that Company:

WAINAKU, HILO, HAWAII, January 22d, 1894.

HON. Wm. G. IRWIN, HONOLULU, H. I.
DEAR SIR:—In reply to yours of the 16th inst. regarding the National Cane Shredder furnished by the Universal Mill Co. of New York, and erected by the Hilo Sugar Co. this past season, I would beg to say, that it has now been in operation day and night during the past three weeks working on plant cane, and also hard ratoons, and it is giving me the greatest satisfaction. The more I see of its capabilities, the better pleased I am that I put it in, as I am satisfied that it will repay the original outlay in a short time, in saving of labor, higher extraction, etc.

It is shredding from 350 to 400 tons of cane every 22 hours with the greatest ease, and it could shred a much larger quantity if necessary. It delivers the shredded cane in an even uniform feed to the three roller mill, which receives it without the intervention of any labor, and as the cane is thoroughly shredded or disintegrated it relieves the mill of a great deal of strain, thus reducing the liability of broken shafts, gearing, etc.

There is a saving of four (4) men daily on the mill, as only one man is required to regulate the amount of cane delivered by the carrier to the shredder. It has increased the extraction from 4 to 5 per cent.

The economical use of steam is generally a serious consideration in adding new machinery, as in most mills the boiler power is tax-d to its highest limit, as it was in this mill, and any increased demand necessitated an additional boiler. But I find that the shredder and the three roller mill engines combined use no more steam than the three roller mill engine did when working on whole cane, while doing better work and more of it, and owing to the uniform feed on the mill, the engine demands very little attention.

The Messrs from the shredded cane makes superior fuel, and the firemen have less difficulty in maintaining a uniform pressure of steam than formerly.

I will be pleased to have a call from parties interested, as it is necessary to see the machine at work to fully appreciate its capabilities.

I remain, very truly yours,
(Sig.) JOHN A. SCOTT,
Manager Hilo Sugar Co.

Plans for erection of these shredders may be seen at the office of the Agents, where prices and other particulars may also be obtained.

Wm. G. Irwin & Co. L'd.

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